



NEWS RELEASE

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Diné College's Wyatt Batony Ready for CNFR in Casper, Wyo.

TSAILE, Ariz. — He runs faster than a lost bull and trains so hard amongst the dunes and hills around the western region of the Navajo Nation Indian Reservation that he has to be told to slow down.

No longer an up and comer in the sport, he can generally ruin a competitor's day and hopes to keep his toes turned out at the College National Finals Rodeo come June 13th.

Tonalea, Ariz., native Wyatt Batony, 21, a sophomore studying health occupation at Diné College, heads off soon to Casper, Wyo., for the second consecutive year competing in the College Nationals Finals Rodeo. The 5-foot-6-inch tall and 130-pound Batony, a Tuba City High School graduate, finished second in the Grand Canyon Regionals with 1,092 points.

"I'm looking for some redemption this year," Batony recently told listeners on Diné College's KXWR radio in an interview with L.A. Williams. "I didn't do that well last year."

Batony qualified this time around in bareback riding. He's coached by (interim) Diné College rodeo coach Fred Tahe.

"He is a very smart and capable rider," Tahe said. "The competition at

this level is beyond good. When it comes to rodeo, (Wyatt) is one of the best to ever come through Diné College."

Even though he's from a small reservation town and an equally small school and will be among the best-of-the-best from much bigger schools and universities throughout the country, Batony said he's nowhere near intimidated by the aura of the event.

"It sounds funny, but this isn't my first rodeo," Batony joked. "I know I'm representing Diné College and the Navajo Nation and I plan to put forth a lot of effort and hard work in winning a buckle."

Batony is the first rough stock rider at Diné College to go all the way to the college nationals since Wilbert Tuni of Dennehotso, Ariz., and also on the Navajo Nation Indian Reservation, did it back in the 1990s. Tuni went on to claim the National Intercollegiate College Rodeo Grand Canyon Region All-Around Champion in Las Vegas. Tuni advanced to the college national finals but failed to place.